

Washington, DC - Reps. Linda Sánchez and Mike Honda fought for and won support for an amendment that would increase funding for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). The amendment was part of the fiscal year 2010 Commerce-Justice-Science Spending Bill which passed the House of Representatives Tuesday night.

SCAAP provides federal payments to states and localities to reimburse them for incarcerating undocumented criminal aliens with at least one felony or two misdemeanor convictions for violations of state or local law and incarcerated for at least four consecutive days during the reporting period.

Rep. Sánchez' full statement for the Congressional Record is below.

"Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support this amendment to increase funding for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). When the Federal government passed SCAAP in 1994, it recognized its responsibility to reimburse states and localities for the arrest, incarceration, and transportation costs associated with criminal aliens.

Unfortunately, this program has been consistently under-funded. This year was not the first time a President proposed no funding for the SCAAP program. Fortunately, the Appropriations Committee allocated \$300 million to the program. While this level is significantly better than zero, it remains \$100 million below the 2009 funding level. Our amendment will provide that additional \$100 million for SCAAP.

Even with \$400 million, states and localities would still only receive reimbursement for a small fraction of what they are spending. This inadequate funding has had a devastating effect on public safety, especially in California and other border states. At a time when many states and counties face budget shortfalls, every dollar reduction in SCAAP reimbursement means one less dollar to spend on essential public safety services. Following SCAAP funding cuts in 2003, the LA County Sheriff's Department was forced to implement a new "early release" policy for inmates convicted of misdemeanors.

From a public safety perspective, it is far better for criminals to serve their full sentences. Without adequate resources, other programs will have to be scaled back or terminated to accomplish this goal. Basic police protection, anti-gang activities, homicide investigations, anti-terrorism activities; and rehabilitation programs to reduce recidivism are programs that could face cuts in California and across the nation if this amendment does not pass.

We introduced this bipartisan amendment to ensure that police chiefs and sheriffs do not have to choose between keeping our youth out of gangs and incarcerating criminal aliens.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment. Thank you."